

# The Innis Herald

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## Hef a Brain?

Lauren Pincente

Sometimes, when I'm bored, I watch *«The Girls Next Door»* in spite of all my beliefs. Kyndra, Holly and the other blonde entertain me to my own disgust. I often sit in front of the tube, mesmerized at Kyndra's *«what's-that-thing-called-again»* routine, no matter how many times she pulls it; Holly's desperate attempts to become the Hef's permanent girlfriend; and Bridget's flighty giggle that makes me wonder if she really has two Masters degrees in journalism and communications. I find the show endearing yet vomit-worthy but most of all, I have come to admire Hugh Hefner, who is hardly worthy of the titles of misogynist, polygamist or sexist.

Hugh Hefner just wanted to start a nudie magazine—and he succeeded at that. After he pretty much overpowered all of his critics by parodying that magazine into millions and setting a high standard soon to be followed (and debauched) by characters like Larry Flynt, the man got bored. The Hef became a playboy himself, playing women and juggling girlfriends at a time; he probably stressed himself out a lot, as many playboys do, with worries that the women would discover one another. So, what is the difference between the Hef and the moronic players that we have to deal with (well, not me personally, but I am thinking of those tugged out kids from Richmond Hill who live at home with their parents and call themselves *«players»* because they do not live out their home-bone man life? The Hef got smart about his situation. When the Hef recognized the problems of being

a playboy, he turned the situation into a scheme. The way I envision it is pornographic. Hugh Hefner has two girls he's simultaneously dating and he does not want to get caught because, hello, public relations issue! So, what does he do? He introduces the girls and, making them feel bad for wanting to be his only girl, somehow gets them to *«bow-chicka-wow-wow»* with him, at the same time. Man comes out looking brilliant, another one in the vault for the stupidity of women.

On an episode I recently watched of *«The Girls Next Door»*, Holly, Kyndra and Bridget went on *«The View»*—stupid move, again, on their part. The women of *«The View»* are cranky, old and sexless. Sitting on their couches is Dick Cheney in front of Osama bin Laden; you're putting yourself in the line of fire. The girls complained that upon meeting the women in the Green Room backstage, they were pretty much blown off as if they were nobody soccer moms who just really, really wanted an autograph. Warning sign number one: the girls should have left right then and there. But did they? Of course not; money and fame are just too important to pass up the special opportunity of going on *«The View»* (newsflash, *Playboy* ladies, anyone can be a co-host these days, they allow the supporting characters from failed television shows and Rosie O'Donnell to host).

Producers apparently told Holly, Kyndra and Bridget that they would all be sharing one giant couch during the interview, to which they agreed. Once on the show, one of the hosts asked them, *«Do you always sit together like that?»* *«No, we don't. We sit apart. We're constantly having orgies with one another (my guess would be Joy Behar because female*

comedians are always bitter towards people that are prettier than them). Naturally, the girls were offended but let's be serious here: what did they expect to happen?

A clip from the reality show after the View incident essentially plays out as follows: The girls climb into the back of the NYC limo they are sharing with the Hef. They bitch about *«The View»* bitches. Cut to Bridget telling the story in a one-on-one interview with the camera. Cut to Kyndra, in the limo, angry and swearing like the dirty sailor that she is. Cut to the Hef's expressionless face. Cut to Holly, looking sad and leaning up for comfort on the Hef, who obviously does not give a damn about what happened. Cut to Bridget, staring out the car window. Cut to the Hef, still not giving a damn. Then, the kicker: when the girls discuss how they were not only attacked by the women of *«The View»* but that they were set up to look like sluts, the Hef responds with, *«Well, they were nice to me»*. Another smack over the head for the ladies. Sure, he will give them all the dogs and pink-coloured walls they want but he will not defend them. Great boyfriend! Now I understand why Holly wants to become his one and only, what with his charming ways.

A bad boyfriend he may be, but the Hef is a smart guy. Not only does he look like the sweet guy who will not judge the ladies of *«The View»* because they have never been inhospitable to him (I think it is just because Joy Behar secretly wants to be in a nudie magazine with Barbara Walters), but he looks smart. Smart because a) he knew better than to get involved in three, blonde, gold diggers, b) he's smart and of course he's sitting there, responsible for what is going on, yet somehow playing it off, like the true playboy that

he is, into an *«I-am-just-an-innocent-bystander»* routine. The man is genius, you say! However, that look of emotionlessness in the car is not completely guileless. We all know that the Hef is guilty as sin for what he puts in his magazine and for taking advantage of young girls' dreams of fame and fortune by holding them up in his mansion, giving them curfews and refusing to let them be with anyone else when that is exactly what he does. But the Hef is such a tactful weasel that he knows he is getting away with it. As for that look he gave in the car? I am pretty sure that was saying, *«Wow, I cannot believe people let me do this»*. I, for one, cannot wait until the day when the reality show of the Hef's disastrous end comes on-air; his sweet, chocolate-covered dream is bound to one day collapse, and for once, the Hef will not stay true to his magazine because he won't know how to play it off. I live for the day when the vault opens and all the stories of the former *Playboy* bunnies' stupidity pours out, teaching young girls everywhere that these women are morons who were not under the control of Hef but who let themselves fall for his ways. Young boys will no longer desire to live Hef's sugar-coated, dreamy life (yeah, right) because they will realize that he never had any control at all, and that his excessive lifestyle was not something he earned, worked at or, really, was smart enough to create; it pretty much fell into his lap. At the very least, I hope that's one way the mansion crumbles.

# The Innis Herald

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Innis College • Room 210 • 2 Sussex Ave. • Toronto, Ontario • M5S 1J5

innis.herald@utoronto.ca • 416-978-4748

Editor-in-chief: Jennifer Charles / Associate Editors: Christine Creighton & Marc Saint-Cyr / Internal Officer: Suzanna Fung / Film Editor: Daniel D'Alimonte / Editor-at-Large: Stephen Hutchison / Photo Editor: Tim Richards / Webmaster: Nick All Nguyen / Layout: Chris Macri  
Contributors: Daniel D'Alimonte / Justin Haley / Alexandra Heeney / Chris Heron / Stephen Hutchison / James Kang / Chandler Levack  
Lauren Pincente / Tim Richards / Marc Saint-Cyr

## The Précis

\* « Female comedians are always bitter towards people that are prettier than them » (p. 3).  
\* « I was the youngest, least educated, and least prestigious of the entire class » (p. 2).  
\* « I'm against one night stands for that reason— you never know if you could be sleeping with a distant cousin » (p. 2).  
\* « The homophobic subtext remains only faintly detectable » (p. 3).  
\* « A generation where nostalgia seems to come directly from Wes Anderson films » (p. 3).  
\* « This proviso is [...] to be contrarian » (p. 4-7).

\* « The plot was replete with very stupid parts » (p. 8).  
\* « In the third act of the film he adds a touch of masculin beat » (p. 8).  
\* « The agitated victims of these raids are the city's criminals » (p. 8-9).  
\* « Moviegoers enjoy watching fatalistic, post-apocalyptic worlds play out » (p. 9).  
\* « Two « jerks » dancing exuberantly along the sidewalk » (p. 10).  
\* « At the secret orgy party, while observing the ritual-sex activities, Bill is warned by a tall, beautiful masked woman » (p. 11-12).

I've now began my second term of grad school, despite still suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome from the first. I did nothing but write essays 16 hours a day for two straight weeks and returned to Toronto a week and a half later. As you can imagine, extricating my brain from « vacation mode » has been difficult indeed.

My class today, however, jarred me, kicking and screaming, out of my stress-induced coma. For some reason, I thought it would be a good idea to take a joint grad school/law school course about modern political trials. Last semester I felt some intimidation from studying alongside Ph.D. students in their late 20s. This class, however, brings new and horrifying meaning to the phrase « inferiority complex ».

The professor, Michael Marrus, is the former Chair of Holocaust Studies at U of T and quite a brilliant fellow. He studied at

## Memoirs of a Grad Student

Stephen Hutchison

Berkeley of course, but that didn't frighten me. U of T professors all have absurdly elite educations. What had me quaking in my urine-filled boots were my classmates. As they began to introduce themselves, I could feel my spincters begin to give way. The first woman to speak already had a B.A., M.A., and LL.B., and was working on her LL.M. Next was a second year J.D. student who did his M. Phil. at Cambridge before working for an NGO in east Africa. A third year J.D. student and former UNESCO worker was next. The fellow beside her was doing his LL.D. After he introduced himself, the professor praised him profusely for an article he had recently published in a scholarly journal. Sweat was pouring down my brow.

I had hoped to find some solace from the history students; I was, however, sorely mis-

taken. A shy woman introduced herself as a first year Ph.D. student, and modestly informed the class that she had done her first two degrees at Stanford. The petite lady next to her was a third year Ph.D. student on full scholarship all the way from Poland. Finally someone announced that he was doing an M.A. in the department of history. My face lit up for a brief moment before he crushingly added that he had done his B.A. at Johns Hopkins. The rest of the introductions were similarly grandiose. I was one of the last to speak, and was by then quite aware that I was the youngest, least educated, and least prestigious of the entire class. I adjusted my collar before meekly and laconically informing the class that « I'm doing my M.A. in the department of history. I did my undergrad here at U of T. I'm interested in nineteenth-

century Britain and Canada ». And that was it.

I now have a sinking feeling that this is what I can expect if I decide to pursue law school next year. Scary though it seems, I've simply become resigned to the fact that I have no choice but to compete against people of this calibre. I initially panicked, figured I was in over my head, and decided to drop the course. I reconsidered, however, after the professor began to discuss the cases that we'll be studying until reading week: the attempted assassination of British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, the treason case of Louis Riel, and the Oscar Wilde trial. I might not be an Ivy Leaguer, but with these topics I'll at least be playing on home turf. In the words of George W. Bush: « bring it on ».

Also, I have a hotter girlfriend than they do. •

## Ancestry or Incest-ry?

Lauren Pincente

Last night was a bad night. I couldn't sleep because I was having the night sweats. Not just regular night sweats but thoserenched-in-sweat-can't-sleep-all-I-feel-is-pain-and-tomorrow-I'm-expecting-to-wake-up-with-the-flu night sweats. Let's just say it was bad. In order to distract myself, I began to theorize. I started thinking about all the different races in the world. I wondered, was there an original race that all the other races evolved from? Asians, blacks and whites are all distinctively different so they must be independent of one another. What about Mediterraneans? They are certainly different from Icelandic peoples. And as I was wondering and questioning the history of the world from the uninformed, unanthropological basis I have, I began to wonder if one day humans would evolve into one species.

Naturally, it would be billions of years in the future by the time we all become one race and the next ice age would probably happen before we even had a chance to keep mating with other races to get far enough, but could it happen? I'd like to think so. I also think we'd all be brown. Any kid who has ever played with finger paints knows that when you mix the red, yellow, black, and white together, you always end up with brown. (I've had experience. In the second grade, we took used baby jars and filled them with different coloured sand—a popu-



lar craft in elementary school— and my teacher, Mrs. Stuart, warned us not to shake them and, of course, I shook mine just because she said not to and the sand turned all brown. (My poor mother, receiving such a thing for mother's day)

So, now that I had concluded that I was almost 100% sure that humans would evolve into a new hybrid brown-skinned race, I couldn't help but wonder what next popped into my mind: if our ancestors are our relatives from our past,

what would one call the relatives of our future? I've developed a few ideas.

Procestors; it only makes sense. An antagonist is the negative of the protagonist, so why not make a procestor the positive of the ancestor? It makes the future seem more ambitious and optimistic. The City of Toronto would eat that shit up in their next marketing campaign.

Incestors. Why not? When we're so far in the future, sleeping around and baby-making within our new hybrid brown-skinned race, there is a chance that we'll be with someone whose ancestors were the same as our own. Chances are some of you are doing it right now. Hell, I'm against one night stands for that reason— you never know if you could be sleeping with a distant cousin. And that's just gross. Might as well acknowledge our grossness by calling them our incestors.

I proceeded to check Dictionary.com's thesaurus on the matter and there is no exact opposite for ancestor. The only antonyms given were « descendant » and « progeny ». I think it's time I create a new word. I'm going to work so hard with the word « incestor », my personal favourite, until Webster's recognizes it as meaning « future descendant ». If Beyonce Knowles can get bootylicious in the dictionary... •





A man rubs his dark stubble before taking a long, deep puff of his cigarette. His other hand jitteringly clasps a mug filled with coffee and adorned with a picture of Friedrich Nietzsche. The cigarette is by now a gravity-defying snag of ash, extending outward like a charred flagpole. The coffee, meanwhile, is blacker than the man's lungs. Photographs of Franz Kafka and Peter Sellers hang on the fridge in the background. The balcony door of the Toronto high-rise apartment is left open, allowing the frigid air to fill the room. Potted cacti partially obstruct a violent pre-Renaissance painting of the Black Death, in which skeletons devour the decaying flesh of the diseased. Unsorted papers are strewn across the room, which offers a curious aroma of gin, cigar smoke and vomit. The man blows a pungent cloud of smoke in my face as he contemplates the answer to my next question. He has at once the pansexual curiosity of Gore Vidal, the dark moral ambiguity of Henry Kissinger, and the narcissistic self-reverence of Norman Mailer. He rambles effortlessly from poetics to politics, literature to libations, Buddhism to bestiality.

This is David Humphreys, the independent director responsible for the darkly comedic dystopian epic, *Man Loses Umbrella* (known in Germany as *Der Untergrund Mensch*, loosely translated as *The Dregs of Meaning*). Recently screened at a

## The 120 Days of Humphreys

Stephen Hutchison

short film festival in Toronto, *Man Loses Umbrella* has polarized critics. Several publications, including the Toronto Star and NOW Toronto, praised Humphreys's work as a brilliant and erotic satire, wryly melding classical film structure with a discordant post-modern sensibility. More recent critics have, however, castigated Humphreys, singing him out as an emblem of society's ever-mounting Sadean depravity. The National Post, for example, has attacked *Man Loses Umbrella* as «the residue of Canada's decline», furiously denouncing Humphreys as «a cultural gutter trash». Christian activist Craig Chandler, meanwhile, has called for the film to be banned, citing it as an example of «Canada's growing, state-funded pornography». Family groups have even gone so far as to picket the Kitchener home of Humphreys's parents.

Like so many of their conservative colleagues, however, Humphreys's critics write poorly, reason poorly, and don't know much of anything at all. *Man Loses Umbrella* is indeed «bleakly nihilistic», as Mark Steyn complains in one particularly inane article. Far from damaging the film, however, its bleakness is the source of its brilliance. *Umbrella* grins irreverently as it exposes the discomforting truth that the only knowledge worth possessing is the wisdom of annihilation. The film is a clever pastiche, revealing a simple plot through amusing affectations. The un-

named protagonist, portrayed ably by the woe-fully unknown Robert Faler, drops his umbrella in a violent windstorm. Charlie Chaplin-esque antics ensue, as Humphreys advances the plot in whimsical style. The film fuses the high comedy of *As You Like It* with the desolate artistic vision of *King Lear*, rivaling the theatrical power of both plays. *Man Loses Umbrella* intrigues the viewer on a subliminal level, burrowing into the recesses of the mind. The homoerotic subtext remains only faintly detectable, yet unmistakably occupies a narrow space at the back of the viewer's consciousness. The plot seems implacably depressing, yet the viewer can't help but smile and laugh at each calamitous turn. By the film's surreal final scene, reminiscent of Orson Welles's *The Trial*, the theatre was engulfed in applause. Indeed, *Man Loses Umbrella* was the festival's only film to receive a standing ovation. Small-minded critics wish to banish Humphreys, but banish Humphreys and you banish all the world.

«You know that this is my first interview», Humphreys mumbles in an almost inaudibly deep voice, «and it shall also be my last». He lays his sulfur pacifier to rest in a nearby ashtray: a crude etching of a naked woman is obtrusively visible beneath the tray's ash, grime, and crumpled filters. He lights a new cigarette, clearing his throat to release raspy, visceral sound—the sound of air

escaping through a thick chasm of tar and filth. I am unfazed by Humphreys's statement. Indeed, his status as an eccentric recluse is legendary within the Toronto arts community. No known photograph of him exists. No one will testify to having seen his face. «You've got to give it to Humphreys», Moses Znaimer told me drolly, «he makes Thomas Lynch and J.D. Salinger seem like attention-seeking media whores». His personality soon proves to be just as inscrutable as his appearance. He parries my every question with the ease of a master wordsmith. He reveals nothing about his influences or his intentions, his technique or his background, returning only stinging witticisms for each query. In an attempt to impress him, I ask a philosophical question about *Umbrella*'s plot. He observes me with quiet disdain for a few seconds before making his reply. «Of all the questions I've been asked», he answers, breaking mid-sentence to pour himself more coffee, «that was certainly the most recent». He seems to regard me with a sort of contemptuous amusement, like a motorist noticing two fornicating insects on his windshield. By the end of the interview, my eyes are stinging from smoke, and I'm no wiser about the auteur or his work. Instead, I feel somehow vaguely shaken. Gazing down the murky corridor of Humphreys's personality, I can only wonder whether I beheld genius, — or madness. ■

I've said it once and I'll say it again: the Dance Cave is hipster purgatory. A dark bellowing cave where good hipsters go to die, we see them in their natural habitat, from the brightly colored Panic-At-The-Disco species, to the sweater vest Seth Cohen set.

I suppose there's something in the water (also known as badly mixed drinks) that sets the blood pumping for all dance cave attendants, as it now apparently the environment where some overly sweaty drunk guy can approach you, tell you that you're a «total hottie» and inevitably try to make out with you as that song from *Napoleon Dynamite* plays. A cave where it is too dark to see anyone's face but bright enough to compliment them on their coordinated neckerchief, the id is allowed to run rampant as you look over the gyrating, sweat-stringed crowd, searching for a nostalgia they've never experienced.

What is the music of our generation? Because it's sure as hell not The Cure, although every 19 year old seems perfectly able to profess their love for «Boys Don't Cry». In a generation where nostalgia seems to come directly from Wes Anderson films, it seems that we can only appreciate a band like The Ramones, if we wear the requisite CBGB t-shirt (the Dance Cave uniform if you add pumps) and drink ironic shots of Jack Daniels to emulate our possibly tame Canadian lifestyle.

In fact here's a checklist of things you should probably see the next time you're at the Dance Cave. Take this with you and do one shot of the cheapest beer you can find when you see:

- An extremely awkward looking guy wearing the «hey I don't have a personality but» uniform of a button down dress shirt and an oversized leather jacket, dancing alone and staring sadly upon your laughing crowd.

- Three emaciated club girls who seem to express their love for Broken Social Scene

by taking as many camera phone shots of themselves, lined up in a row of most desperate to happily coupled, waiting in vain for the next guy to take a turn at their glaucous woman's lips.

- One guy who wears strictly flannel men's pajamas and a straightly parted shoe salesman haircut. In the world of Dance Cave he is a gladiator, and women should be offered like sacrifices for his sweet dancing skills and ability to never sweat even by last-last call.

- Two vaguely emo gentlemen who seem comfortable enough with their sexuality to grind up against each other, all apparently in their attempt to work a crowd and woo the attention of any girl with a studded belt. When they do score the girl with the belt, they spend most of their time still grinding up against another.

Do one shot of Jack Daniels when any of the following songs are played:

- «Displacement» by Le Tigre
- «This Charming Man» by the Smiths

## Dance Cave Drinking Game

Chandler Levack



- «Maps» by The Yeah Yeah Yeahs
- «Mr. Brightside» by The Killers
- «Boys Don't Cry» by The Cure
- «Take Me Out» by Franz Ferdinand

(Because chances are, if it's an indie single by a band mainstream enough to get on the cover of *SPIN Magazine*, you'll be hearing it at Dance Cave, every single time you go there.)

Bonus points are given for the following items:

- Any clothing you find on the ground, now deserted by a cave dweller. (I for instance, found a white studded belt, which I immediately wrapped 'round my torso to fit in with my surroundings.)

- The line «I am so not drunk!» given by anyone is obviously, quite impaired to their unfortunate caretaker for the evening.

- A gross make out session that results in you giving out your secret phone number to a stranger. (I like to call these «bait-outs».)

- Smiling despite the fact that you have entered the most ridiculous environment for your Saturday night adventures. Smiling because every so

often, you realize that you really do like the look of neckerchiefs and that old Broken Social Scene single is actually quite pretty and sometimes it's nice to hang out with your friends and search for love because everyone gets so uptight in University and maybe it's okay to express the things repressed because James Joyce is all about that anyways. So really what you're doing right now (grinding up against a stranger as you talk about the fact that you both took the same anonymous first year philosophy class, his hands wandering as you mention Descartes), is a reflection of all aspects of the so-called «University Experience». Even if it's more pathetic and post-modern than you anticipated.

- Crazy dancing by a crew of boisterous frat dudes. Moves include: «the shopping cart» (marching in place which you mime searching for ramen noodles on imaginary shelves), «the fisherman» (cast your imaginary net while your friend pretends to get hooked) and «the sprinkler» (jerky movements with your hands and head showcase the momentum of the machine). This allows them to «not dance» but still denotes a fun upbeat attitude.

The reason that people come to a place that has the word «Cave» in the title is because it's a) free for U of T students, and b) totally ridiculous. No matter how many times I've sworn that I will never return (one time I ended up dancing with a guy in a dress on Halloween), it draws you back. Leading me to believe that Dance Cave is the one place that holds an eerie mystical quality and the «so-bad-it's-good» appeal. Like Future's Bakery and The Green Room, the Dance Cave calls you in, and you just stay. And yet we keep coming back, searching for more. ■





In keeping with the Herald's new designs on independently-minded form, voice and style, included here is a list of forty albums released in 2006 that have not been present on any of the year-end lists compiled by the University of Toronto's other student newspapers. This proviso is not to be contrarian, but rather to encourage interest in alternative selections, especially as quite a number of genres have gone unaccounted for this year.

Further information about each release can be found on our website, including its position on this past year's non-Voice incarnation of the Pazz & Jop poll hosted by Idolator, as well as fifty more campus-neglected recommendations.

#### alva noto's *For*

*For* is a collection of works by the German artist composed in the past four years for (here informing the title) various individuals and their endeavors, each named alongside the corresponding track. This collection marks a return to the outstanding electronic minimalism that characterized his earlier work, and though the rhythm is not as clearly emphasized as his bass-driven works, it remains as intriguing as ever—especially in the foreground of the cyclical melodies of «*rrr*». The wealth of styles is perfectly suited to the album's dedicatory nature: the mystic electronics of Jhonn Balance («*ostrudek*») juxtaposed with the light boxes of Canadian photographer Jeff Wall («*wall anfang*») demonstrates how different influences so understandably conflate in the expressive nuances of alva noto. It's this tender regard for a variety of material that makes this release so continually refreshing to listen to, and so absolutely engaging.

#### Americ & DJ Clue's *Because I Love It, Vol. 1*

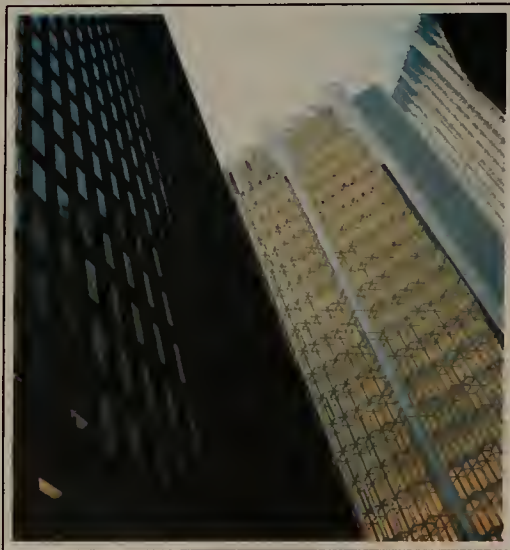
Americ is too often considered one of many Beyoncé clones, but the secret is gradually getting out: she's actually much more interesting. This fall, Americ did what has to be a first for an R&B singer by releasing a mixtape—yes, in the hip-hop sense, and it follows exactly that tradition. Immediately, she takes aim at a singer who recently took a green light to bite Americ's style, delivered with the typical talent and conviction that separates her from too many singers lacking the latter. Furthermore, Americ hijacks the production of a number of hip-hop tracks, including Kanye and Pharrell's «*Number One*», Cam'Ron's «*Weekend Love*», Lil' Scrappy's «*Money in the Bank*» and Rick Ross's «*Blow*»—which is phenomenally executed—at once showcasing her abilities, her shared sensibilities with hip-hop, and a vital consciousness of this growing medium. Finally, previews of the next album, also entitled *Because I Love It*, are present: «*That's What You Are*» and «*Take Control*», the Cee-Lo guessing single that is currently destroying anything else on the pop charts. This is heads and shoulders above anything else in the genre.

#### Brutis with Derek Bailey

This August 2004 performance featuring legendary free improvisational guitarist Derek Bailey and British improv group Brutis was Bailey's last in Britain, having moved to Spain, and, unfortunately, passing away shortly thereafter on Christmas of 2005 due to motor neuron disease. The disease was already beginning to take its toll and Bailey's inability to hold a pick necessitates the relatively soft playing found here.

## The Forty Best Albums of 2006

Chris Heron



However, Bailey's adventurousness and penchant for playing with younger players ensures a rich, typically engaging set, aided in no small part by Brutis's own talent. The electronic contingent melds beautifully with Bailey's softer side, just as his history with saxophonist Tony Bevan successfully encourages the traditionally convoluted aspect of his playing, not once being lost in the more brash moments. As the track names «*Savich*», «*Locate*» and «*Detroy*» indicate, Bailey's *raison d'être* creates—and thus thrives on—obstacles, and this is a particularly exciting late-period display of its effectiveness.

#### Boris's *Vain*

Boris released no less than three albums in 2006, not including their collaborative album with Sunn O))), so it was difficult to choose just one. *Pink* became a critic's darling, incorporating the psych-rock preoccupations of the shorter *Akuma No Uta* with equally appetizing ambient stretches. Yet *Vain*, a vinyl-only limited release, was their most exciting release of the year. Coming in two parts, the (relatively) more easily available first part is the focus of this rating, and is differentiated by its twelve tracks featuring vocals; the second part being two instrumental, noise-based pieces. The opening two tracks act as a reminder of, or, more likely, informational session pertaining to Boris's avant-garde and doom pedigree that dominated their earlier works. By track three, the more recent rock leanings are ushered in, but with a welcome increase of reckless abandon. The majority of the tracks blister, taking the recent brevity to crust punk regions. The final track is an incredible mutation from this new attack back to the doom and drone, which frames the release. This lacks the immediate books of *Pink*, but for its addition to the Boris oeuvre and Atsuo joining in on vocals, this is an even more interesting, invigorating and flat-out fun release.

#### Boxcutter's *Oniric*

North Ireland dubstep artist Boxcutter's first album is an excellent document of the electronic contingent of the genre. «*Bad You Do*» perfectly encapsulates his sound, melding traditional dub

elements with drums that would be at home on a release from Squarepusher or labelmate Venetian Snares. This approach, along with tracks like «*Mossy*» and its brief free jazz sax, are emblematic of the genre's seemingly constant invitation of many disparate elements. Like other notable dubstep albums from this year, including Burial and Kode9 + the Spaceape, Boxcutter excels in this environment by crafting a unique voice while operating comfortably within the dubstep sound, and the many traditions that informed its existence. The considerable drive, generous reverberation, soulful vocal samples, abstract cutting, flourishes of flute and incomparable melody of *Oniric* contribute to make every track as appealing as they are noteworthy, and presents just one of the powerful combinations we're afforded by this genre.

#### Carla Bozulich's *Evangelista*

If this can be called country—and more than a few may be led into the Bozulich world from her re-envisioning of Willie Nelson's *The Red Headed Stranger* in a song-for-song cover album—it takes all the conventions—the seclusion, regret, anger, religion, national identity—and explores every dark, obscure corner, especially on the opening «*Evangelista I*». This experimental approach is nothing new for Bozulich, but on this first track it's as much a primer as a scorching call to arms. That it is brilliantly tempered with the relatively conventional rendition of the traditional «*Steel Awguy*» that follows is a testament to this album's variety, with the remainder of the album situating itself admirably in the spaces between these two extremes. If «*Evangelista I*» was a shock, these more subtle pieces hit even harder by virtue of unearthing even more variations in such a relatively calm and casual manner. The finale, «*Evangelista II*», sees the most endearing vocals of the album treading over an experimental background (the Constellation crowd are found throughout the album), before they're left almost completely alone in the astounding second half. The soulful expressiveness of Carla's voice, as brashly dramatic as it is gentle, is the star here; we're just fortunate to receive accompaniment that is as richly dynamic.

#### Ran Blake's *All That Is Tied*

Third Stream pianist Ran Blake takes the opportunity on *All That Is Tied* to revisit pieces from his four-decade strong catalogue. Though there is no new material, that Blake approaches these pieces with the same vigour and candor that has characterized his playing throughout his career ensures these performances never run stale. Like the form of the album, the key ranges. Blake expertly elicits countless styles from his solo piano playing, yet none feel superfluous or impenetrable in their inclusion. Rather, they contribute to the greater drama that's inherent in the playing itself, evident in each piece (e.g. «*Birmingham U.S.A.*») as well as their relation to one another: the lumbering «*Epilogue*» is more striking after the empty space calm of «*Sontagism*», but like many of the pieces, it too fades away in its conclusion. Yet, preceding his take of «*Later Rain Christian Fellowship*» in the set, one cannot help but laugh. This is but one of many feelings evoked by this great work and by the career of Ran Blake.

#### Burial

On Burial's debut album there is a persistent crackle of static that runs through the at-once brittle and sweltering environment. It's a coarseness that is both inviting and caution inducing. As this sound becomes more and more rain-like, the trading between skeletal, winsome coldness and busting, hazy friction begins to conjure the industrial cityscapes of England that spawn this powerfully emerging genre—the city's pirate radio stations also evoked from the sound. Like a city, this is a work that exists as the sum of parts, enveloping a number of staples that, though born of different genres (especially the vocal samples, which apply just as much as a jungle and garage trope as the sources themselves), are understood as sharing a close proximity. Though dubstep albums are not incredibly common at the moment, each facet of this multi-dimensional, ever-shifting work is so fully realized that it masterfully maintains a single prominent, complex tone over the course of its near-hour-long portrait.

#### John Butcher & Eddie Prevost's *Interworks*

This is a titan of a release, based both on the names involved and the music within. AMM alum Prevost focuses primarily on bowed symbols and tam tam here, while Butcher's playing is based in the nuance of reverberation that has characterized his most recent, ElectroAcoustic Improvisation informed work. The drone of Prevost carries the release, though, letting Butcher fluttertongue and escape within each note without requiring the same patience on the behalf of the listener as *Cavern* with *Nightlife*, or even this year's collaboration with Christof Kurzmann. That is to say, Butcher's unmistakably inventive saxophone playing is as gripping as ever, it's just easier to get caught up in it here. What's significant, though, is that the end effect is no less a revelatory experience. Here's hoping these two, who have spent far too much time between their few collaborations, reunite more frequently in the future.

#### Christina Carter's *Lace Heart*

*Lace Heart* is the latest CD-R from Charalambides' Christina Carter's Many Breaths label. Like last year's *Human As Guitar*, this foregrounds Carter's solemn and beautiful guitar and voice, while tempering it with





a relatively more traditional folk approach than earlier minimalist fare. The use of overdubs allows for the meditative repetitions to be augmented by floating, spectral guitar and haunting duets with herself, such as that found throughout the absolutely stunning «*I Am Sean*». Making excellent use of the medium, this is exquisitely personal in both subject and execution—a more palatable Jandek, and required late-night listening.

#### Andrew Chalk's *Goldfall*

I have not had the opportunity to see the visual accompaniment to this piece—a brief description states it was released on a scarcely minimal 100-unit run—but it is easy to see how the apparently slowly transforming, blurred visuals compliment this LP. The two sides presented here feature heavily filtered piano (courtesy of labmate Vikki Jackman) that slowly mutates, the instrument itself occasionally identifiable, piercing through the fog of drones and backwards-traveling tones. The first side's activity increases gradually, centering around heavy reverb and emphasizing the piano work. This ushers in the especially affecting ethereal hiss of the second side, giving a distinctive, enveloping analogue bent to the ambience that calls to mind more pastoral images than typically associated with the music. It culminates in a devastating pitch shift that at once satisfyingly concludes the piece as indicates the entire journey.

#### Ornette Coleman's *Sound Grammar*

With *Sound Grammar*, Coleman's first release in ten years, one immediately notices that none of the intensity has dissipated over the years since he ushered free jazz into the spotlight. This live performance from October 2005 with his band of the last three years features two basses, plucked and bowed, and his son Denardo on percussion, and the understanding they share—however much may be the harmonologies—is phenomenal. This is an infectious release, accentuated by the inclusion of the audience's applause throughout the set. Six new songs are played, driven by the same distinct voice and ear for melody that has characterized all his work, while wholly representative of this new environment. The ballads are particularly poignant here, placed emphatically amidst a break-neck set, and with «*Sweet Talking*» being as emotionally appealing as the best we've come to expect from Coleman's body of work. Coleman's interest in shading the experience with his band yields two new interpretations of classic Coleman pieces («*Turnaround*» and «*Song X*»), and although it's a disappointment that the recent version of «*Lately Woman*» was not included, «*Song X*» closes the album fittingly: though Coleman leads the galloping charge, the three are consistently operating in one consciousness—with one grammar—to create something of their own in the moment.

#### Count Bass-D's *Act Your Waist Size*

Count Bass-D has been given the short end of the stick so often that it permeates every corner of his recent work, and this album is no exception. He's the ultimate underdog of the backpack set: there's a notable similarity between his delivery and MF Doom's—a collaborator, no less—and his beats almost come with a quality guarantee, but he is given no quarter—literally. Like last year's *Beggarwhistl*, this works to the Count's advantage, rendering the adventurous, at times tickety, boom-bap production as a despit-

all-odds optimism that is at once reflected and contrasted in the anxious, business-focused lyrical content, which casts a world-weary frame around his already casual flow—far away from an embarrassing and unwarranted Tom Waits tip other rappers find themselves on.

#### Current 93's *Black Ships Ate the Sky*

There is a clarity of vision on the prolific David Tibet's *Black Ships Ate the Sky* that sees his lyrical preoccupations—faith, death, apocalypse, mythology and mysticism, to name a few—at their most vivid and intriguing of late, paired with some of his best songwriting—thanks, in no small part, to one of the best bands he's hand, here including Six Organs of Admittance's Ben Chasny. The folk-based melodies are strong, with outstanding string accompaniment, and the more experimental flourishes show a restraint that accentuates the overall atmosphere rather than render the work unpenetrable. Moreover, there is a host of guest appearances, including Marc Almond, Will Oldham, Antony and Shirely Collins—most appearing on the many versions of «*Idumea*» that run through the work—that underscore this as a perfect place to delve into the intimidatingly large and convoluted oeuvre of this most intriguing artist.

#### Terry Day's *Interruptions*

The cover reads «*multi-tracks, solos, words and whims by Terry Day*», and that's as astute a description of this time machine of a release from People Group founder Terry Day. Recorded between 1978 and '81, this literally runs an improvisational gamut over its 32 tracks. What's so remarkable is how Day elicits such a rich, engaging sound and performance from each of the startling array of instruments employed here, especially the saxophone. The multi-track advertised on the cover is tapped so that Day can augment these playings by soliciting a virtual personnel based solely on himself. The punk pieces are notable exceptions, featuring an actual band in addition to Day and his hilarious delivery of vocals. Each piece crashes into the next like an Eisenstein film, the improvisation punching through any ideology. Day's music is infectious in the same manner as it is fascinating, inspiring and jarring: by any means necessary.

#### El-40's *My Ghetto Report Card*

As «*Tell Me When to Go*» effectively illustrates, *My Ghetto Report Card* is the mainstream introduction to Hyphy, and fittingly so, as it is one of many innovations to which El-40 has been at the ground floor. The acknowledgment may be belated, but it's fitting that the movement be ushered into the spotlight by its most consistently strong performer. Not only is the first half of the album deliciously hot, but equally great tracks like «*Yee*» are also peppered throughout the second half. Due to this level of quality, an almost unavoidable slack does occur near the end, such as the quicksand of a «*Gimmie Head*», and the skits are almost disastrous to the album as a whole. However, El-40's presence on the mic is undeniably engaging, even when he falters, and though the guest appearances are uniformly good, that one could complain how they limit his verses per song only confirms the quality of this outstanding, important release.

#### Peter Evans's *More is More*

*More is More* is the first Peter Evans release to be made available to a relatively wide audience, and it's more than welcome. Adopting a number of free improvisational techniques normally associated with saxophones—Evan Parker's influence is certainly felt here—Evans has released a solo trumpet set that is unlike any other. Furthermore, all but two of the pieces are performed on a piccolo trumpet. The range of playing, especially

considering instruments employed, is astounding. «*Air*» stands as one of the most (literally) breath-taking pieces I've heard this year, and it is simply representative of the album's sound as a whole—only the well-placed coda of «*Clothes of Inhabitants Near of Far Away*» approaches convention, underscoring the sheer distance heretofore traveled.

#### Paul Flaherty & Chris Corsano's

##### *The Beloved Music*

It wouldn't be much of an understatement to say that the Flaherty/Corsano combination can do no wrong. Occupying a space between jazz and noise—at the very least with regards to their audience—the level of talent is only contended with by the level of ferocity. The repartee the two have is remarkable, and one could spend hours listening and to their recorded output and still marvel at the confounding type of communication that occurs amidst such a flurry. This release is no different, and possibly the best realized. Each of the three pieces on this live set have no shortage of awe-inspiring moments, with «*A Lean and Tortured Heart*» being especially potent. I'm tempted to say this is Corsano at his peak, at least as far as releases with Flaherty are concerned, and the first third of this track has an absolutely blistering solo, matched a third of the way in by an invigoratingly epic drum roll. The cover may feature two skeletons, and there is a punk quality to their basic set-up and attack, but the title, a play on their first release (*The Hated Music*, a reference to free jazz's reception), is even more apt, for soul, they are unmatched.

#### Josephine Foster's

##### *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*

Josephine Foster is one of the premiere folk singers of current times, blessed with an incredible voice and a complexity to her music that attunes her to both the sublimely simple and tension with her more avant-garde leanings. For this album, Foster calls upon seven 19th century German pieces, to which she applies her unmistakably operatic delivery—made only more striking when singing in German. The accompaniment, though, is integral to the album. Classical-leaning pieces such as «*Wehmut*» are augmented by piano just as they are given new context with the harmonica. «*An die Musik*», on the other hand, is treated to jarring, downright ferocious electric guitar as an inescapable counterpoint to what might otherwise be a conventional folk number. Foster's way of creating such a pervasive atmosphere is what makes all her work so compelling, and this is no exception. The employment of field recordings throughout, and the thunderous «*Auf einer Berg*» contribute to give an ominous bent that is hard to shake, even during the lighter numbers. It's an intriguingly otherworldly release that demonstrates that the folk tradition's imagination can only gain when the form reflects the content as it does here.

#### Tim Hecker's *Harmony in Ultraviolet*

At this point in Tim Hecker's career, his ambient tracks are all so expertly crafted that he makes the affair seem effortless, which is why when he hits at his more abrasive his work as a whole becomes especially moving. Taking cues from *My Love Is Rotten to the Core*, tracks like «*Stags, Aircraft, Kings and Secretaries*» and «*Spring Heeled Jack Fills Tonight*» crackle and buzz, tempering the longer stretches of more traditional, palatable washes of sound. Similarly, the «*Harmony in Blue*» suite is off-set by the equal but opposite charge of «*Radio Spiritism*» and the two-part «*Whitecaps of White Noise*» that follow; just before the conclusion of the album returns the work to its vital equilibrium. There are innumerable nuances within each, but it is this push and pull that Hecker employs for the first time so prominently within a single album that

make this one of his very finest efforts.

#### Ryoji Ikeda's *Dataplex*

The stiff, borderline abstruseness of minimalist glitch music is impressively tempered by Ryoji Ikeda, never once sacrificing the richness and precision inherent in the best of the genre—and many tones employed here—but as the arc of the first five tracks reveals, there is a logical progression from the cold mechanical noises to rhythmic, active music. Throughout the entire album the focus shifts between the former and the latter, the juxtaposition allowing the listener to acknowledge the less obvious similarities that link the extremes. The shift from «*Vortex*» to «*Vortex*» could be a synecdoche for the entire album, sounding like a machine developing a soul. Appropriately, the following «*Matrix*»—at 10 minutes long it is by far the longest piece on the album—reprises many of these sounds, the relaxed, ethereal breaths comparatively alive. This is a fascinating and moving album, which retains its formalism while appealing to one's emotions: as demanding of countless revisits as it is attractive for them.

#### Jazkamer's *Metal Music Machine*

Just as the name is difficult to spell with its many variations, so too is it to describe Jazkamer. They're certainly metal, and there's a tremendous adventurousness with the avant-garde, but there is no irony in the metal, nor are the noise and other experimentation a bid for seriousness. Rather, the genres are united for their similarities in confounding expectation and thereby progressing sound itself: the name of the album is a play on *Metal Machine Music*, one of Lou Reed's most infamous examples of rebellion. Apart from these aspects in the styles themselves, the mere juxtaposition of them is jarring to say the least. The belligerent noise of opener «*Friends of Satan*» is cut in two by the doom and drone of «*The Worms Will Get In*». However, the transitions are anything but illogical: to chart things at a basic level, the album moves from metal to noise to doom to metal and to noise again, resting on a strangely apt conflation in the Glenn Branca-esque «*Ocean Gilder*». This is a supreme meditation on genres that is hopefully only the beginning for further meta-hybrids for these genres.

#### Junior Boys' *So This Is Goodbye*

For better or worse, what sets *So This Is Goodbye* apart from the outstanding debut *Last Exit* is that a more definitive Junior Boys voice has emerged, resulting in what can more comfortably be labeled an album. With Jonny Dark's early departure during *Last Exit*, some of the more clear-cut club elements are now gone, but the album is none the worse off. It's nostalgia that drives this work, from the lyrics of «*Count Sautermeister*» and its distinct Depeche mode to the renovations made on Sinatra's «*No One Cares*». As can be inferred from the album title, these are affecting moments («*Goodbye*»), linked by the range of emotion they convey by virtue of their decontextualization. Lacking any of the awkward posturing that burdened many electronic pop releases from this past year, while never being overly dramatic or obvious, it's this scrapbook mentality born out of the inherent lack of identity that Canadians face that the Junior Boys have adeptly drawn upon for one of the most sophisticated and satisfying pop releases this year.





#### Killer Mike's

*I Pledge Allegiance to the Grand* Hip-hop label woes in '06 are not exclusive to the Clipse—as embarrassing as GQ's Wilco reference was. Bad experiences with both Sony and Big Boy's Purple Ribbon Record's in relation to the release of his long-finished *Ghetto Extraordinary* album have lead Killer Mike to release this « underground » (don't call it a mixtape) two-disc reaction on his own start-up, Grand Time Records—the title applying equally to his new place of loyalty, and the attitude that has lead to overcoming these obstacles. If the urgency of each track does not make this clear, the inclusion of the Hot 107.9 interview—and subsequent « *I Will Not Lie* » diss-track—following Purple Ribbon artist C-Bone's comments against Mike makes it crystal. Each cut is packed with venom, pushed harder still by young, unknown producers that weren't given the name of day at Ribbon. Like the more widely known *Moor Fish*, Killer Mike also takes this opportunity to introduce a new wave of MC's. However, where they were over-represented on Ghost's album, they perfectly compliment Killer Mike's approach here: taking shots at everything, especially those in positions of authority. « *That's Life* » encapsulates everything that is great about this album, and stands as one of the best rap singles from last year. Overall, it's a fairly even-handed look at drugs in America and the relationship they share to working hard to elevate one's position in less-than-ideal circumstances (an apt metaphor for business in general), which makes indictments of the wars on rap of Oprah, Cosby and Bush—to only name a few of his targets—that much more poignant. « *The comment Kanye made was damn near right! But Bush hate poor people, be it black or white* ». Over the two discs, this does not lag for a moment, and that it had to be self-released is as much an indication of flaws in the label system as it is a testament to Mike's tenacity and relevance.

#### Kode9 + the Spaceape's Memories of the Future

Fresh off of hosting *Dubstep Allstars Vol. 3*, Kode9 and the Spaceape collect a number of their singles on this debut release for Kode9's own label. As can be inferred from the title, dubstep, although comprised of a number of genres and tropes from throughout the years, has the greatest claim to the future of music at the moment—even if that might entail dystopia (appropriately, « *Backward* », found here, was featured in the film *Children of Men*). The connection with Hyperdub signee Burial is obvious in the music, which is on the cold and meditative side of the dubstep realm, although the needle drops more often on the brighter side of the sound spectrum here without the foregrounded emotional melodrama. The Spaceape co-billing is essential, and too often forgotten or written off. His lyrics are consistently engaging and his presence both affects and reflects Kode9's work, be it in his repetitions, grim pictures or even melody, which crops up more often than one might imagine here. Of the best dubstep albums released this year, this certainly is the most pop informed, and if that sacrifices the cohesion of Burial's album, it increases the range, afforded by a song-based format.

Leafcutter John's *The Forest and the Sea* The problem with most hybrids of folk and electronic music is that it's almost always completely the former, with condescending appropriation of the latter in the most ba-

nal of manners. Departing from label Planet Mu, Leafcutter John has used the opportunity to make a slight shift in styles, calling upon his folk roots from an already predominantly electronic career. This results in an exemplary combination of the two. The concept album, complete with a fable-esque story and corresponding album art, evenly divides between folk and electronica, never ignoring the dark corners of the former, while including the coarse edges of the latter—a legitimate sea change, away from the middle-of-the-road compositions that have compromised many efforts in the quasi-genre. The narrative is compelling while unobtrusive, as the tracks progress in a logical manner that utilizes the tracks heavier on electronics to cover the ground while those with lyrics bring the story up to speed. Pointedly speaking, it's a great effort all around.

#### Liars' *Drum's Not Dead*

The improvements the Liars have made with each



release cannot be understated. With their third, *Drum's Not Dead*, the days of the unfortunate name « *dance punk* » are thankfully that much farther in the past. The album coalesces the many great experimental aspects of sophomore release *They Were Wrong, So We Drowned* with a focus and cohesion necessitated by the complex, mysterious conceptual narrative framing the release. Each track perfectly straddles pop and the avant-garde—energy and confident restraint—as emblemized by two of the premiere songs of the year (« *Let's Not Wrestle Mt. Heart Attack* » and « *The Other Side of Mt. Heart Attack* »), making Liars one of the only relevant American rock bands of today. Unlike the peaks and valleys of *Wrong* and its puzzling sequencing, almost every track here stands in and of itself—most with incredible hooks for such an atmosphere—but taken as a whole this is the most compelling case for the rock staple of the concept album since its inception and subsequently dubious critical fascination. The level of engrossment is unparalleled by anything in the genre this year.

#### Lil' Wayne & DJ Drama's *Dedication 2*

Picking a Lil' Wayne mixtape is as difficult a task

as picking a single Boris release, but the wave of acclaim that Weezy was riding post *Carter II* gave the perfect context: the first track is entitled « *Best in the Business* », and for the remainder of the tape he's only providing the proof. DJ Drama maintains his usual level of quality, taking advantage of the mixtape medium's ability to use impossible beats (especially T.I.'s « *I'll Hat You Know* »). The repetition of key samples throughout the release, along with his duties hosting the affair, lend a feeling of spontaneity and the instantaneous that mirrors Weezy's own flow and lyrics, which are loose and typically hilarious throughout. When things reach their conclusion with the absolutely superb « *Georgia... Bush* », it's Wayne's own levee-breaking—the subject an elephant in the room that is expected to be expounded on from the moment the New Orleans native starts rapping on this tape. What we're left with is exasperating, demonstrating Wayne's ability to shift tone with a deftness as sharp as the indictment leveled against the president. The most interesting rap release of

sounds draw from Drew Daniel receiving a cigarette burn (Germ's Burn) from Don Bolles, and the shaving of M.C. Schmidt's head, emphasizes the vital relationship between the artists and their muses. The genre hybrids achieved are as successful as the clear emotional dynamic maintained in each, and though they change with each « *sound biography* », it is a credit to the work that they remain distinctly personal, and thus distinctly Matmos—even if, for some, that includes the obligatory concept that frames the work.

#### Mouthus' *The Long Salt*

Brooklyn duo Mouthus' approach to noise is rooted firmly in rock, which is most noticeable in their incorporation of drums. This one important aspect continues to keep Mouthus a relevant voice within the community, as showcased here: the instrument reflects the catering distortion and electronics on jams such as « *Trains Again* », gives propulsion to the rolling « *I'll L* », and plays an important counterpoint as an anchor within the washes of noise on « *What Knife Says* ». Overall, this spells a return to form after the comparatively mellowed *Slow Globes*, though that sound has carried over here on « *The Burns of Them* », a compelling psych drone odyssey. Including Samara Lubelski's violin—firmly in Henry Flynt(s) country—on « *Ziggurats* », Mouthus have at once conflated different strengths and taken things forward, creating a striking addition to an already potent discography.

#### My My's *Songs for the Gentle*

*Songs for the Gentle* is the debut album by Berlin the deep house trio My My. Though they share their label with last year's critics' darling Isokle, My My have a more measured, restrained sound that almost disguises the numerous styles called upon within their house template. The pastoral cover confirms the modest, transitional approach as much as the name. When album-proper ends with « *Secret Life of Pants* », the brilliant hip-hop hybrid is not as noticeable stylistically as it might be as a standalone track—as far as My My singles are concerned, it's still relatively subtle. Its emphatic position, though, is indicative of another use of the album format: The set progresses as a whole, drifting from the early headphone richness to the more obvious club fare, kicking off with the outstanding « *Prepain* » before climaxing with a *Pants* (especially in those left-field drum rolls halfway through). More than a collection of tracks, this is a great house album.

#### The Necks' *Chemist*

The most immediately notable aspect of this release from the consistently outstanding Australian jazz trio is its departure from their traditional one-track-per-work approach into multiple pieces. Certainly the nature of each of the three twenty-minute compositions presented here warrants the separation, but the final product is no more consumable as that term and this formal change may imply. The minimalist bent has the works just as meticulously paced as one has come to expect from the ensemble, and just as rewarding. The mysterious plodding groove of « *Fatal* » is stage for Abraham's anxious, fluctuating piano, conjuring the noir the title connotes as it interweaves with increasingly urgent strokes of noise. The employment of the minimalist electronics at the onset of « *Buoyant* » dramatically shifts the pace, introducing their traditional





restraint into the album, while encouraging Buck's excellent drumwork into the foreground. To this end, and with album title in mind, the final track « *Ahilleru* » serves to unite these dynamic poles: Surging drama with meditative flourishes. The synthesis is rendered so expertly that its middle section seems to approach post-rock in its accessibility, before the shimmering Reich-esque work by Abrahams literally rises to the top, making this just an intriguing addition to their oeuvre as it is a comfortable entry point.

#### Om's *Conference of the Birds*

The ex-Sleep stoner rock duo return without some of the rougher edges of their debut, but have taken things to their logical mantra-driven cyclical conclusion in the process. Which isn't to say this release forgets the lumbering riffs—rather, by scaling things back for the majority of « *At Girza* », a wider spectrum of sound exists, making the song's finale all the more moving. The second of the two-sidelong tracks, « *Flight of the Eagle* », is less of a departure, but it's no disappointment—the plodding is harder, and the tempo changes are almost as rewarding a finish. The formal similarities, specifically the repetition eventually ushering in nirvana, is beneficial to the sound by granting a narrower focus that better achieves its singular goals than the often-wandering *Variations on a Theme*. Overall, it's a supremely enveloping release.

#### Evan Parker's *Time Lapse*

Illustrious improv saxophonist Evan Parker's first effort for John Zorn's Tzadik label takes Parker's justly celebrated solo talents and combines them with the next logical step: multiple Evan Parkers. *Time Lapse* alternates between solo performances and the overdubbing of multiple solo performances, at once relying on Parker's history, while pushing the final presentation forward. « *Ak-Kok-Deer* » is a particularly well-crafted example of the new technique. This presents a suitable environment for the organ piece included here, an instrument I've never heard Parker play before, but manages to evoke his characteristic voice nonetheless. As the pieces range from the last five years, the dialogue constructed and implications raised in the juxtaposition of the two forms are notable—especially between the overdubs themselves—providing an astute meditation on questions and emotions conjured in the title. This is one of Parker's most compelling recent efforts.

#### Polwehchel's *Archives of the North*

For this hatLOGY effort, ElectroAcoustic Improvisation powergroup Polwehchel lose mainstay guitarist Burkhard Stangl, but gain percussionists Martin Brandlmayr and Burkhard Beins. Their presence is immediately felt on the opening piece, melding seamlessly with the rest of the group. Saxophonist John Butcher is at top form on « *Mirror* », but the high points lie in the last two works. The first « *Magnetic North* », is an improvisation, and the looseness plays integral contrast to the measured and minimalist pieces that precede. « *Sie and Setting* », the final track, is just as comparatively busy as a « *North* », but its composition is vignette-like, resulting in a different richness than the first three. Whether this new lineup is an improvement remains to be heard—the new dynamic will take some getting used to for both performers and listeners alike—but this is a strong start, nevertheless, and like



all Polwehchel, appreciates over time.

#### Janek Schaefer's *Migration*

*Migration* is Janek Schaefer's mostly electronic soundtrack to a site specific dance choreographed by Noémie Lafrance. As the album and track titles might imply, this is a release that is predominantly shifting. Sounds drift in and out just as the focus jumps both clearly and abruptly. The inspiration was found in nature, and specifically the migration patterns of birds, who can be heard among the field recordings featured on the subtle introductory piece. Also included to significant emotional resonance is an organ from a church in Lourdes—an instrument whose sound often floats not unlike the studied aves. Like the Chalk release discussed previously, there's an ethereal dimension to the proceedings that reflect these, literally, atmospheric concepts—Lafrance's dancers being suspended high above the audience via bungee cords. It is this instrument that introduces the actual dance, which is far more dynamic, as well as accessible—the work of Christian Fennesz is often called to mind. Overall, an enveloping, accessible release that stands on its own by so adeptly reflecting and encapsulating the concepts that enlisted the work itself.

#### Matthew Shipp's *One*

After a string of electronic releases as curator of

the ineffable tone into clear studio sheen, it also helps in underscoring and encouraging Doseone's dynamic delivery, as heavily tracked as ever. That's not to say that the distinct atmosphere is lost—tracks like « *Namainisland* » are as devastating as ever, unmatched anywhere in hip-hop. Like Dose's elaborate tale of the titular hero, this is firmly connected to their past work, and if it's, at worst, a slightly more polished addition to the story—lyrically and musically—that's only indicative of their consistently strong career.

#### Rafael Toral's *Space*

*Space* is the result of three years spent shifting from his noted experimental guitar to entirely jazz-influenced, self-made and modified electronics, and the first installment in Rafael Toral's « *Space Program* ». The title, as the cover would suggest, refers to the astronomical region, and specifically our interpretation—50's sci-fi sound effects especially. However, as the album's three pieces unfold, one also realizes how much is predicated on the abstract nature of space, and the ElectroAcoustic Improvisation preoccupation of sound as a filler of space, silence included. When the instrumentation—limited enough over the liberally paced hour to construct a clear language—is at its most dense, the jazz influence becomes most apparent, and the genre and iconographic lines this draws constitute the most enclosing aspect of this complex work. So much so that when brass instruments do join the fold in the third part, it is merely the logical conclusion. Each exploration of this CD has yielded so much that the only reservation I have in my recommendation is that with the potential of nine more albums in this program, it's difficult to know if enough is apparent at this time to say anything for sure.

#### Wolf Eyes' *Human Animal*

Wolf Eyes are a noise group, but their high visibility is indicative of their, and I use the term loosely, accessibility. Bigger name releases such as *Human Animal* are often theorized to be the easiest starting point, but that this is intentional is a dubious proposition. It belies what makes Wolf Eyes so interesting, and that is their striking range, which allows for noise to also seem accessible in the first place. Choosing between this release and *Black Vomit*, the Victrola set with Anthony Braxton, was a chore, but they are not dissimilar releases. Jon Olson's sax plays a prominent role, framing what is satisfyingly presented as a whole album. This is also as sparse as stretches of *Vomit*'s first track « *The Mangler* », while allowing the electronics to be more prevalent, creating a richness that the studio setting affords. This demonstrates a facet of Wolf Eyes not often recognized outside of the listening environment: Patience. Contrasting with the Sub Pop debut *Burned Mind*, this is largely a cold, sparse, measured work, and while thick showers of noise certainly break through, the spectrum effectively created makes this the most cohesive of Wolf Eyes releases to feature many separate tracks. That said, their patented metal/hardcore informed work still finds a home here, with a cover of No Fucked's « *Noise Not Music* », and the driving single « *The Driller* ». Wolf Eyes consistently earn their position at the top of the noise heap. • Further reading for this article is available at [www.miniseriald.com](http://www.miniseriald.com).

#### Subtle's *far here, far fool*

Anticon alum Subtle are a hip-hop group that occupy an unfortunately maligned area between the backpacking underground and the avant-garde. This work maintains their trademark sprawl—especially multiple directions within each song—although it employs a more satisfying structure than the previous efforts that makes it sit easier as one complete work. Apt companions have been drawn between this album and the band's animated live performances, and the music, appropriately, draws on both their last album and the previous EP's for the different styles while ejecting them with an added adrenaline. While this change in production departs slightly from





My Left Foot (1989), supposedly Jim Sheridan's masterpiece, is a self-proclaimed sentimental piece, and a very well done one at that. I think I prefer *In America*, but Daniel Day Lewis gives a wonderful performance. It's a good story that is well told and very well acted; a very good film but not a favourite. Daniel Day Lewis plays Christy Brown, born with cerebral palsy, and only really able to control his left foot. Through many struggles he becomes an accomplished, somewhat self-sufficient painter, and a successful writer. He comes from a poor family in Dublin, where eight grown men sleep in a single bed, and in which the family eats porridge for breakfast and lunch so that they can save money to buy Christy a wheelchair. It is one of those "touching" stories, but it's convincing and I never felt cheated or that my heartstrings were being pulled. The picture earned its right to sentimentality, and that's a true rarity in the genre.

In *Brick* (2005), when Brendan's

## Three Films Alexandra Heeney

(Joseph Gordon-Levitt) ex-girlfriend and a "soul-mate" is mysteriously killed. Brendan sets out on a mission to find out why, with the hope of setting things right. *Brick* was so very wonderfully stylized; the dialogue had those strange patterns somewhat reminiscent of old noir but with a new twist. Scene transitions were nifty, and accompanied with a suitable score. Joseph Gordon-Levitt has by now long since proven himself as a serious actor outside of *"Third Rock From The Sun"*. But the plot was replete with very stupid parts that made no sense and that are simply unforgivable. The picture kept trying to convince us that its style could successfully rise above a nonsensical plot (maybe it's trying but failing to be *The Big Sleep*). I am not really sure I bought the characters - their motivation was never really explained and I am not sure that I believe such a scenario: don't they even consider going to class or ever see their parents?), though I know there are certain

elements of truth. The femme fatale was so very blah; I never believed that she had anywhere near enough intelligence to pull off much of anything aside from playing chauffeur. But it is a beautifully photographed film; the cinematographer could easily earn himself a place among the ranks of greats like Robert Richardson and Cesar Charlone. Although a very flawed picture, if writer/director Rian Johanson could improve his writing even slightly, he has the potential to make innovative films.

*The Gay Divorcee* (1934) is one of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' best (and I have seen it many times), along with *Top Hat* and *Swing Time*. As always, Astaire and Rogers are the perfect picture of romance, singing and dancing into each others' hearts. In this one, Rogers plays an unhappily married woman, seeking divorce by getting herself caught in the arms of another man. She meets Fred Astaire, a professional dancer

of course, when her dress is caught in her aunt's trunk at the port, he tears her dress in the process of removing it from the trunk. She hates him immediately; he falls in love on the spot. He tracks her down in a charmingly stalker-ish manner as only Fred Astaire is capable; she resents him for it but eventually falls for him. They sing and dance, there are mistaken identities, and more dancing. They simply do not make musicals like this anymore. The Fred and Ginger movies always had great music by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin or George Gershwin. Music that makes you just want to tap and sing and dance along with. The dancing is second to none: Fred Astaire was always a perfectionist, so everything got rehearsed endlessly until Fred was satisfied - and this certainly pays off. With wonderful numbers like *"The Continental"*, *"Don't Mean To Bother You"*, *"Let's Knock Knees"* and a light-hearted romance plot, *The Gay Divorcee* is a joy to watch. \*

## Three Films from 2006 Justin Haley

### Notes on a Scandal

A deliciously savvy and entertaining picture that anchors itself on the incredible performances by Cate Blanchett and Dame Judi Dench. Watching these two women go head to head in some of the most raw and fearless battles is nothing short of the most astonishing acting seen in years. Based on the novel by Zoe Heller, the film is a psychological drama of sorts, in which Dench comes to provide a "support system" for Blanchett after she enters into an adulterous affair with one of her young students. The picture is strong - it has a tone and edge that is indescribable. It gets under your skin making you itch for more fiery moments between these glorious actresses. Director Richard Eyre should also be praised for his choice to cast the witty Bill Nighy as Blanchett's unknowing husband. In the third act of the film he adds a touch of masculine heat that

parallels and compliments the sky-rocketing estrogen levels of Dench and Blanchett.

### Disco Chicks: Shut Up and Sing

It's enthralling to watch three humble country girls turn into self-affirming divas as a result of their unrelenting bravery. Their infamous, so-called "nymphomaniac" remarks had those southern American politicians and country fans diligently burning their CD's, while labeling the chicks as "communists". Barbara Koppola has pieced together a picture revealing the strength that resides between these three artists, friends, and mothers. There is nothing better than seeing the ferociously fabulous Nathalie Maines respond to the *"they shouldn't have their feelings hurt"* comment. She loudly retorts: *"George Bush... you are a dumb-fuck!"*. This is a lovely and powerful piece of feminist filmmaking and Koppola should be recognized

come Oscar time. The Chicks' music has become richer lyrically and instrumentally post 2003, and their newfound strength and dedication for each other is what made one of the best albums of the year.

### Away From Her

This is the crowning achievement in the world of film this year. *Away From Her* is a directorial debut that is beyond exquisite from Sarah Polley, our proud fearless Canadian girl. Here we have the story of Grant and Fiona whose lives suddenly take on a different direction after Fiona is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. The picture is incredibly moving and undeniably honest in its portrayal of the effects this disease can have. Polley's direction is stunning. She is breathtakingly good at capturing the simplicities of her characters' actions. Her canvas is drenched with the glorious di-

verse colours of the Canadian landscape as it passes through each season. I adore Sarah Polley, and this film made me even prouder to have her as a fellow Canadian. She is increasingly showing herself as one of the most influential Canadian artists. I was a little distraught, however, after talking to Kay Armatage of the Cinema Studies Department about this film. After an advanced screening of the picture for Kay's incredible Film Festival seminar, she informed me that the producers of the film were worried that it will have a difficult time finding an audience due to its heavy and older themes. After hearing this I nearly sobbed. *Away From Her* is a great piece of art, and I cringe at the thought of the popular age demographic ignoring this film. Beautiful, honest and real, *Away From Her* is a rewarding picture that I encourage you to experience. \*

### Like a post-modernism, a film noir

is a complex, ambiguous term that is often misunderstood and misused. When most people think of a "noir", they think of tough trenchcoat-clad detectives, beautiful-yet-deadly femme fatales and dark, forbidding street corners and alleyways. While the first two are more stereotypical elements of film noir, it is the third trait that most intimately resonates with the true essence of noir, which will be explored in this essay. Whenever I mention the term "noir", I'll be referring to the atmosphere created by the mise-en-scene and cinematic aesthetics (lighting, photography, etc) of a given film rather than the more genre-based trademarks of character and plot elements. While *Brick* contains classic noir tropes like hard-boiled dialogue and signature character types (the grun gumshoe, the femme fatale, the shadowy arch-villain), a film like *Night of the Hunter* can just as easily be classified as a film noir without any of these traits, identified as such primarily for its use of dark, expressionistic imagery. The same can be said of *M*, Fritz Lang's 1931 masterpiece about a child killer (played to perfection by Peter Lorre) stalking the streets of Germany. Another example of a film noir is one of contemporary director David Fincher's best films, *Seven*. What makes these film noir's work is their craftsmanship within the cinematic medium itself - these films look and feel like film noir's straight to

their rooms - and often, that's all it takes to classify a film as noir. By examining first *M* (possibly the first and one of the greatest serial killer film ever made), then *Seven*, I'll describe how Fincher used many of the same noir-ish traits Lang displays in his picture, and how both directors took the fullest possible advantage of cinema in creating a specific atmosphere for each individual film.

**"What makes these film noir's work is their craftsmanship within the cinematic medium itself - these films look and feel like film noir's straight to their roots"**

A landmark in German cinema, *M* harkens back to films from its country's Expressionist era in its skillful manipulation of the mise-en-scene. Such pictures (which include the silent *Nosferatu*, *A Symphony of Terror* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) were noted for their creative use of film sets and lighting in creating a gothic look, which properly expressed the inner thoughts of their often-tormented characters. *M* undertakes similar strategies in order to create a menacing urban setting through which the killer Hans Beckert lurks and hides while the city's inhabitants live in constant terror. Many of the shots are taken from

above looking down on a given street, implying that the entire city is vulnerable to the unseen killer (an observation which is given leverage when we see the killer sitting by the window of his upper level apartment as he writes a taunting letter to the press). Most of the picture takes place at night, and the streets are depicted as dark, nocturnal passages, the light from lampposts illuminating the damp pavement and heavy fog that hangs low in the air. As Roger Ebert notes in his review of the film, the city in *M* is noticeably filthy, and in the bars, taverns, board rooms and basement hideaways, the presence of such filth is persistent: stained beer steins, platters of greasy food, cigar butts and ash, and (almost always) thick plumes of cigar smoke. Moreover, *M* delves into a wide variety of the city's interior spaces as well: sparse living quarters, plummeting staircases and cluttered, dark corners of deserted buildings - including the storage area where Beckert holes up as his hunters literally tear it apart in their methodical, obsessive hunt for their quarry.

In such a forbidding setting, these searches - both the police and the criminal underworld - significantly add to the gritty noir imagery of Lang's picture. The policemen are intimidating giants in their long black uniforms and pointed helmets, towering over the ordinary citizens as the "cat in the hat" of the city. The agitated victims of these raids

are the city's criminals, who eventually make plans to catch the killer themselves. This wide variety of crooks sport striking faces with harsh, prominent features as they strategically position themselves within the city to safely watch over the children - they literally become the face of the city, and like the city they patrol, it is often unwashed, grimy or simply ugly. The real standouts are the heads of the various crime organizations within the city, a colorful bunch led by the notorious criminal Safebreaker, who in his bowler hat, black gloves and long black trenchcoat draped around him, looks every bit like the underworld kingpin of noir lore.

One character who definitely deserves treatment is Beckert himself - or rather, the way by which his chilling presence is presented within *M*. Rather than even partially depicting the horrific violence and/or perversion of his crimes onscreen, the picture used subtler methods within the mise-en-scene to merely suggest Beckert's crimes, thus allowing the audience to use their own imagination. When little Elsie Beckmann is kidnapped in the picture's opening scene, neither the killer nor the actual kidnapping is seen. Instead, as her worried mother cries out her name on the soundtrack, the film cuts to various locations within the city, all glaringly vacant. We see the police, the press, the crowd, the seconds ago roll forlornly along the ground,





abandoned. A balloon given to her by the killer bobs against some power lines momentarily before floating away. All through these cinematic devices, little is pictorially revealed, yet what is implied is horribly clear. Similarly, Beckert is never shown actually committing his crimes (some of which may be too perverted to show even by today's standards), yet through an amalgam of images—a shadow spilling across the placard spelling out his crimes, the switchblade he uses to peel a fruit for another potential victim—his villainous character and intent is made very clear, indicating the subtle power of noir-based imagery which *M* exudes in every frame.

In terms of story elements, *Seven* is on more familiar ground within the noir (sub-) genre. It also focuses on the hunt for a serial killer (one who models his crimes after the seven deadly sins and is later known as John Doe), but unlike *M*, it is told from the point of view of two set protagonists—detectives Somerset (Morgan Freeman) and Mills (Brad Pitt) who are assigned to the case. *Seven* utilizes the same expressionist tactics used by *M*, but with an increased intensity that makes the picture an altogether more immersive experience. Fincher's film is set in an unspecified city whose gloom positively emanates off the screen. It has a highly monochromatic look, with its color scheme mostly limited to varying shades of gray. There is an almost continual downpour of rain, which evokes *Blade Runner*. The noise of the city

is an invading, ever-present buzz of sirens, raised voices and the steady rumble of traffic. This city especially comes across as a gothic underworld through the various spaces explored within it: rotting, dilapidated buildings infused with layers of dirt and mold, smoggy, garbage-littered exteriors and surreal subterranean passageways into neon-lit hell-like dungeons (the killer's apartment, the



sex parlor where the last crime is discovered, etc.). Populating this metropolis-turned-nightmare is, as in *M*, a cast of small yet memorable bit players who contribute to the tough, pessimistic attitude of the city: the grim-faced police officers and gung-ho SWAT team members who assist Somerset and Mills, the world-weary civilians who populate the streets and public places, and the various sleazy characters who inhabit the city's underbelly. Many of John Doe's victims are exaggerated to the point of fairy-tale grotesqueness, particularly the gluttony and sloth victims—but not always en-

tirely because of John Doe. Seven's nameless city is a stylized menagerie of the grotesque, exuding depression and despair with admirable potency.

Like *M*, *Seven* is a picture filled with recognizable noir iconography—primarily in Somerset's hat and tan trenchcoat and Mills' black leather coat, making the two protagonists look more like the old-fashioned detectives of 1940s

pass through various buildings, over rooftops, across traffic and down alleyways, weaving their way further into an urban labyrinth all the while blanketed by a heavy downpour of rain. The sequence ends in an alley filled with garbage bags and puddles, where the killer surprises Mills, smashes his face in and disarms him with ease. In perhaps the most iconic noir image in the film, the killer holds his gun to the kneeling Mills' head, the black rain-speckled barrel in extreme close-up and sharp focus while his body and face remains a dark and menacing blur in the background above. This single shot sums up the pure noir essence that resonates throughout the picture, right up to the final (also iconic) shot of detective Somerset and the police chief (R. Lee Ermey) walking into the dying sunlight amid a field filled with police cars.

This March, *Zodiac*, David Fincher's latest film, will be released. For him, it's a return to the serial killer genre (or sub-genre, if you prefer) which chronicles the enigmatic Zodiac killer who haunted San Francisco in the 1960s and '70s. How closely Fincher will abide by noir stylistics for this picture remains yet to be seen, but for the director of *Seven* to be working with similar story material seems like more than mere coincidence. With any luck, *Zodiac* will continue the tradition of—or present an interesting variation on—the elements of noir found in *M* and *Seven*. • Further reading and citations for this article are available at [www.innitherald.com](http://www.innitherald.com).

## Future Noir

James Kang

I figure that some of my favorite pictures are science fiction films, many of them set in the future. At the same time I look back on some of the classic films of the forties and fifties and realize I really enjoy noir. I also love Robert Siodmak's *The Killers* and Anthony Mann's *Raw Deal*. I especially love Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* and Luc Besson's *Fifth Element*. Having added these last three films, I was thinking recently, especially when having a discussion amongst peers, that noir elements are still prevalent in films today. That of course is obvious, but I am wondering why pictures like Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* explore elements of early noir style. Surely it ties into notions of a dark future, especially from the perspective of present day filmmakers. There is a feeling of unease in such pictures, and this leads to an extremely fatalistic view. For some odd reason, it seems that moviegoers enjoy watching fatalistic, post-apocalyptic worlds play out. Perhaps we enjoy watching images that remind us that life is not so bad after all.

*Blade Runner* is set in a dark and fatalistic world. It is first and foremost a steel infested hub populated by prostitutes and bums. The homeless are rampant in the streets. If you notice, the depiction of the future in *Blade Runner* is blanketed with an impending sense of doom and uneasiness. This is in line with both classic and post 1970 noir pictures such as Polanski's *Chinatown* and Altman's *The Long Goodbye* where dark themes of loss and doom extend to characters within the story, as they are often concerned with their identity or lack of one. In futuristic films such as *Blade Runner*, the argument is presented as to whether or

not robots have the ability to create and sustain human identity, and whether it matters if they can. This links up with the common themes of the classic film noir period where the questioning of identity is raised, whether it is self-identity or identity as a whole. Take for instance *Raw Deal*. Identity of female character is challenged constantly with questions arising for the audience as to who the main female character actually is and what purpose she serves as far as the narrative functions. In the future, *Blade Runner* presents these themes just as well as some of the more recent pictures such as Stanley Kubrick's *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* and the aforementioned *Minority Report*.

*Minority Report* also deals within a dark fatalistic world. However, Spielberg chooses not to blanket his world in literal darkness like the traditional noir setting, but instead uses the problems of society to symbolize the darkness of night. This intelligently reflects a dark world in a daytime setting, much like some of the classic noirs that avoid nighttime settings such as Kubrick's *The Killing*. For instance, the futuristic world in the picture is supposedly a safer environment now that the murder and crime rate have dropped. However, there is still a fairly large drug problem. The main character in the film, John Anderson (Cruise), is a drug abuser himself. It is ironic seeing as how he is the only symbol of justice and law. But many of the characters in noir films are flawed, usually with pasts they want to forget. In the end, the focus of a noir film is on the broken-down characters and their battles for meaning. Anderson is such a character. He has lost his child and is obsessed with obliterating crime so that situations like his can be averted. However, because he loses his son his marriage ultimately falls apart. Anderson is like many of the prototypical noir hero's in that he is trying to

make wrong things right, but is caught up in a situation that puts him in a compromising situation. Thus, he is forced beyond his will to fight against the law in order to clear his name.

A third, and final film that uses many noir elements in a futuristic environment is *The Fifth Element*. Although many of these elements are hidden behind the positive energy of the picture, the future is still a fatalistic one where everything seems to go wrong, but much like *Minority Report*, the film is blanketed in light. Many of the film's shots take place during the day. The architecture is inspired by a Gothic 40's presented in pulp novels and noir-inspired comic books like *The Sandman*. Also, there are prototypical noir tropes such as the femme fatale. It differs in this film, however, since Leeloo plays both femme fatale and lead heroine. She is dangerous and can lead the main character, Korbien Dallas, to his destruction. At the same time, she is the key to saving the universe. It is an interesting twist to have a female play both the key to life and death within the futuristic world.

Dallas shares qualities with the aforementioned Anderson from *Minority Report*. He is a broken down cab driver and retired soldier who is down on his luck. Although not as bleak as Spielberg's film, this picture makes more use of the dangerous woman found in classic noir of the past, as Leeloo leads Korbien into an odd journey playing him in dangerous situations. To draw one more connection, the film's antagonist (played by Gary Oldman) is unforgiving and ruthless, much like Rick Coyle in *Raw Deal*. He has his own agenda within the world, and is indirectly linked to Leeloo through the 5 elements.

Besson's intent is to show a flamboyant theatrical presentation of an otherwise dark and fatalistic story. He takes a note from *Blade Runner* and becomes congested with colors of

bright blue and orange that cover up the dark nature of the characters and setting. It juxtaposes polar opposites to see if they fit together or repel violently.

The future presented in these pictures is unsettling, especially when the future from the present perspective is a grim one. It is interesting to say that our

**"The future presented in these pictures is unsettling, especially when the future from the present perspective is a grim one. It is interesting to say that our future is going to get worse, because it draws attention to the past."**

future is going to get worse, because it draws attention to the past. However, little has changed since the noir films being made during the forties and fifties. We still have fatalistic tendencies, war and famine. It is a constant reminder that we must never forget that things could get worse, and that we must strive to be reminded constantly that we as human beings have a conscious choice to make a difference.

• Further reading for this article are available at [www.innitherald.com](http://www.innitherald.com).





# Notes on Stanley Kubrick

Daniel D'Alimonte

Perhaps more than any other American director, Stanley Kubrick's films can change with repeat viewings. In 1968, at the Premiere of 2001: A Space Odyssey, he sat patiently and counted the hundreds of people who left mid-way through his masterpiece. Today, it is inconceivable to imagine cinema without the influence and technical accomplishments of 2001. More recently, Eyes Wide Shut (1999) is a "sex" picture that did not far well at the box office or in the minds of reviewers, but has garnered more critical attention since its release. Killer's Kiss (1955), on the other hand, is one of his first efforts and has not garnered post-run attention. It is a simple run and gun story on one level but a formally complex one on another. It goes against Classical style to capture a specific feel and reality of the main characters and their surroundings. The result is a film noir that is ideologically displaced compared to Classical films of the studio system.

Killer's Kiss is a story of a has-been boxer in New York searching for meaning in his life. It follows Davy Gordon (the boxer) as he ends his boxing career and falls for his next door neighbor Gloria. Davy is put in an extraordinary situation when Vincent, a mob boss also in love with Gloria, puts a price for his head in order to prevent him from winning Gloria away from him. In the end, after several murders and close calls, Davy narrowly escapes with his life and winds up getting Gloria. They kiss.

Killer's Kiss puts character psychology at the forefront to depict a subjective reality. This is obvious considering that the majority of the picture is a memory and recounting of past events in Davy's mind. More evident is that Davy's recounting of past events focuses itself mostly on character subjectivity within his own subjective perspective.

A gritty and urban diegetic setting is created out of indices denoting the world that Davy and Gloria live in and perceive. Shots of the city convey a dark and empty atmosphere. Kubrick has gone on record to say, "I wanted to film the smell, the feel and color of the city." Cars busied in traffic lit only with headlights and reflections off the wet pavement. Seagulls circle over the empty part of the city. Vincent gives chase to Davy on a vastly open and quiet rooftop overlooking the "dead" city. In short, feelings of uneasiness and loneliness are signaled in shots such as these. Moreover, shots like these are easier to connect to character subjectivity when we have other indices such as Davy's fishbowl, his letter from Uncle George, and other objects from his apartment that are connected to his state of mind visually. Each shot adds a subjective level to the already unfamiliar (dark and empty) objective world.

Kubrick develops character state of mind further when he adds another level to Davy's subjective world by going into great detail about the background of Gloria. When Davy asks her how she began working for Vincent, a flashback introduces us to the melancholic world Gloria came from. Although we only see her sister dancing to a soft ballad song, her voice-over informs that she loses her mother, her father, and finally her sister, who kills herself. The voice-over flashback gives Davy and the audience a strong idea of Gloria's angst and uncertainty. Moreover, the amount of time that the picture spends on this voice-over and flashback suggests a more concerned state with the feeling associated with Gloria's

subjectivity than it is with narrative events to plot. This is similar to how the diegetic city is used as a reflection of Davy and Gloria's perceptions (see above).

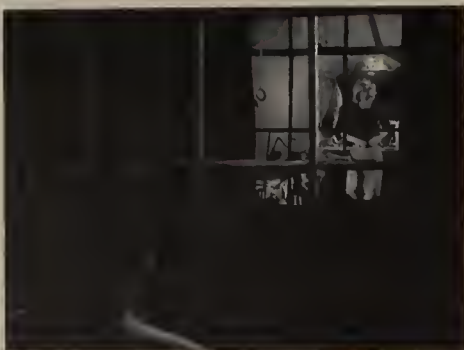
Cardinal functions also take a backseat to the building up of the fictional world. Although Gloria's scream, Uncle George's invitation to Seattle and the murder of Davy's manager act as cardinal functions which progress the narrative, it is precisely Vincent who drives the story with his love and jealousy of Gloria. Although he is used as a catalyst, Vincent also receives equal treatment psychologically when he is seen clenching his fists (he wants to punch Davy) and throwing a glass at the camera (frustration with Gloria). With instances such as these it is clear that the heart of the picture lies in its attention to character detail within the fictional world and in the development of Davy, Gloria and Vincent's subjectivity on the level of story.

On a representational level, the discourse similarly works to convey the subjective world of Davy. A melancholic slow jazz-like theme song plays repeatedly throughout the picture as Davy and Gloria go about their lives. As the plot develops—for instance when Vincent kisses Gloria—the music track switches to

a glass of water in his hand. He is illuminated by a faint flood light (moonlight). Suddenly, Gloria arrives home and turns on a lamp that carries all the way over through her window frame and into Davy's apartment. It perks his interest and draws him to the window ledge (foreground). By now, Gloria is illuminated in the frame in the back-

**"In this distinct fashion, the film becomes both innovative and ideologically displaced when compared to Classical Hollywood. This makes Killer's Kiss a film noir."**

ground while Davy is illuminated by the original flood light as well as by the new hard light that acts as a secondary flood light to him. Between them is complete blackness except for outlines of the window-crosses as well as a brief reflection of Davy in his own window. The hard light reflects off his chest. The same effect is achieved in the very next shot. This illustrates how this picture differs from typical noir by using rim lighting simultaneously with one hard light source. It contrasts with famous sequences from Out of the Past



Kubrick's distinct use of noir lighting to convey character subjectivity.

an upbeat jazz track. Similarly, in the beginning and end scenes the film is marked by an escalating drumbeat. Moreover, when music paralyzes plot motivation it is always marked by a return to the melancholic jazz theme that captures the spirit of Davy and, to a lesser extent, Gloria.

On-location shooting gives the film a realism that would not be achieved in a set (i.e. fog in sky and heat from sewer, etc). Shots of the city are dark or empty and usually correlate to Davy's outlook on life (i.e. the dream sequence), but nonetheless they are all filmed on-location and therefore bear an element of realism and authenticity. This also helps to make happenings within the city—such as the two "junks" dancing exuberantly along the sidewalk—more believable. More important, on-location shooting allows the filmmakers to rely more on the dark and natural look of night while at the same time forcing them to light scenes accordingly. Gritty low-key lighting is the result.

Similar to Out of the Past, Killer's Kiss employs rim lights (flood) appropriately positioned to the side-rear of actors and above or below the camera to differentiate foreground (character) and background. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the middle of the picture where Davy and Gloria are in a room. In this scene, we first see Davy resting in the dark with

and T-Men where rim lighting disappears whenever a single hard-light source is used, resulting in dramatic silhouettes. Here, Kubrick achieves high contrast effects with fill light so that foreground and background are differentiated without creating silhouettes.<sup>1</sup> The one exception is the scene where Vincent's henchmen kill Davy's manager. Rather than a fill light, a single light source from behind the actors is used to cast silhouettes just like in T-Men. In other scenes, Killer's Kiss employs standard noir effects such as a "Villain Lighting", where Vincent's (and Davy's) face is illuminated by a light source underneath him. This exaggerates the uneven surface of his face (i.e. eye sockets darker than cheekbones).

The lighting is aided by cinematography. Like virtually all film noirs of the period, this picture relies on wide-angle lenses. As a result, almost every shot is distorted with objects looming exaggeratedly toward the screen (fishbowl, staircase). The benefit of such a lens is its ability to film with extreme deep focus. Citizen Kane, Orson Welles film made 14 years earlier is, to my recollection, the best example of such focus. The aforementioned apartment scene between Davy and Gloria is only possible because of the depth of field afforded by the wide-angle lens. The wide-angle lens also makes it easier to cast deep shadows that in turn signal the gritty urban

environment of the city at night. It also allows for longer takes since there is more room for the viewer to look at (i.e. Davy pacing in the train station with travelers in the background). This does not stop Kubrick from finding other innovative ways to convey setting reflecting character state of mind. When Davy is having a nightmare, the film changes to a negative image of the film stock so that lights become dark and darks become light. Reversing the image quality and playing it in fast-motion disorients the viewer and presents yet another distorted perspective of the diegetic world. Another excellent example is Kubrick's extended use of fast-motion. When Davy is punched around by Vincent's henchmen in the loft near the end of the picture, it is recorded in fast motion to emphasize the effect of each blow. It is important to see how Kubrick uses lighting, wide-angle lens, negative film stock and fast motion as ways to work against Classical Hollywood style as it lends a gritty and offbeat setting representing Davy's subjective perceptions and his bleak prospects. This is a tendency of noir, and one that I feel Kubrick continues all the way up to Eyes Wide Shut.

It is clear that Killer's Kiss works against trends of Classical Hollywood cinema. Besides on-location shooting, lighting and cinematography, editing differentiates it from the objective-based reality of Classical Hollywood. When Davy fights Vincent in the mannequin factory, Kubrick breaks the 180 degree rule to make the events out of order and hard to organize spatially. In the boxing sequences, we see Davy's point-of-view of his opponent, and often get knocked down when he does. The effect is to get a feel of his experience in the ring. The rapid cutting also helps to disorient the viewer. This makes it hard to establish spatial organization, but nonetheless gives a subjective point of view of the boxing match. This is the goal of the picture since we can say that all other stylistic elements (and narration on the whole) work to represent Davy's subjective state and point of view. Voice-over and flashback editing also confirm the tendency of Killer's Kiss to deviate from Classical standards and work towards a realistic portrayal of the world subjectively. At times the picture uses an embedded flashback where Davy's voice from the present engages with a scene in the past, but overall it employs an all-embracing voice-over/flashback. This flashback/voice-over technique is a way to give an alternative view of the world presented by Davy as opposed to dominant ideology. In Killer's Kiss, the gritty and dark world created by Davy's flashbacks becomes a unique perspective of the world that is different from typically clear and concise depictions presented in Classical Hollywood.

On a formal level, Killer's Kiss is a complex story with a distinct subjective view of a city. This makes the film both complex and realistic as it goes beyond simple depictions of an external and objective world by forcing the viewer to correspond to Davy's (and Gloria) perceptions of that world. By operating in this distinct fashion, the film becomes both innovative and ideologically displaced when compared to Classical Hollywood (i.e. Only Angels Have Wings). This makes Killer's Kiss a film noir. With the release of Eyes Wide Shut 44 years later, Kubrick reestablishes a noir world through mood. Except this time, he foregrounds the "dark" and "mystery" of the noir world and its radical conclusion.





# Notes on Kubrick Continued

*Eyes Wide Shut* follows the same structure of *Killer's Kiss* by presenting the world precisely how the main protagonist experiences it with his mind. The emphasis on what Bill Harford (Cruise) sees and how he tries to make sense of it is the focus of the picture. His perceptions of the world around him are focused to the point that basic logic becomes compromised. To put it bluntly, I personally feel *Eyes Wide Shut* is so much of a film noir that it cannot be classified with most noirs because it is to noir. Unlike *Killer's Kiss*, a traditional noir, *Eyes Wide Shut* uses noir tendencies but pits them against nothing so that what you get is only noir mood and subjective understandings of the characters. The noir elements are so overdrawn that they ignore traditional conventions instead of undercutting them.

*Eyes Wide Shut* is the story of a young doctor and his wife, Alice Harford, a rich New York couple living in an extravagant Manhattan apartment. They have a young daughter named Helena, and one night they leave her with the baby-sitter so that they can attend a party hosted by Bill's friend, the millionaire Victor Ziegler (Sydney Pollock). At the party, the couple split up and each run into an opportunity of infidelity. For Bill this comes with two young, beautiful women whereas for Alice it is with a suave Austrian gentleman who wants to « personally take her upstairs ». While Alice rejects her admirer, Bill is called away from the two young women who try to take him to « where the rainbow ends ». He is ushered into Ziegler's extravagant washroom to revive a naked and coked-out woman sitting in Ziegler's chair. The next night, they smoke pot in their bedroom and get into an argument over jealousy and desire: Alice reveals a fantasy she had had of a naval officer whom she was willing to take off with and give herself up to. Visibly upset, and interrupted by the news of a patient's death, Bill leaves the house to visit the deceased's family. Bill and Marion (who is the daughter of Bill's just-deceased patient) have a moment before her fiancé Carl enters. Bill then leaves only to be picked up by a prostitute wherein he agrees to have sex, but then unexpectedly leaves. He continues down the street and arrives at the Sonata Cafe where he meets Nick Nighingale (Todd Field), an old friend and jazz pianist who tells him he has a special gig later tonight, and gives him the password to a secret orgy located outside of New York. In order to join the orgy, Bill rents a costume from Milich, the owner of a costume boutique who lashes out at his estranged daughter when she is discovered in the back room half-naked with two Asian men.

At the secret orgy party, while observing the ritual-sex activities, Bill is warned by a tall, beautiful masked woman to leave before he is caught. Once he actually is caught as a trespasser he is only permitted to leave after he is unmasked and after the aforementioned woman redeems him by giving herself up. If you are still following, the headmaster warns him that it is none of his business what happens to the woman who saved him and that if he tells anyone what he has seen there will be harsh consequences. Bill returns home and wakes Alice who had just had a nightmare that she was having sex in an orgy with other men while he watched, and that she was laughing at him. The next day, Bill goes out again, this time to revisit the sites of the day before: Carl is home with Marion in their apartment, the prostitute has been diagnosed

with HIV, the costume shop seems like a different place altogether (Milich offers his daughter and his own services to Bill), Nick Nighingale, the pianist, has been mysteriously removed from his hotel and a former beauty queen named Amanda has overdosed and died. Bill figures that she was the one who tried to save him since she was also the same girl at Ziegler's party who overdosed. He is followed by a mysterious man and then called to Ziegler's house where he is told that events of the night before were staged and that the girl who had tried to warn him was Amanda, but that her death had nothing to do with the party. Bill leaves and when he arrives home he sees his missing mask from the orgy party laid nicely on top of his pillow beside a sleeping Alice. He breaks down and cries to Alice, telling her that he will « tell her everything ». The next day, they take Helena Christmas shopping and discuss the events of the last three days. Alice tells Bill that they need to be grateful for what has happened, and that they need to do something very important as soon as they can: « fuck ».

*Eyes Wide Shut* is a closed-text. The story is fragmented, but nonetheless in the aforementioned scene, where Bill visits Ziegler's house for the second time, most of the loose ends are tied up. We learn about the orgy, for instance, that Ziegler was there or that the woman who saved Bill was a prostitute and that that prostitute was Amanda the same drug addict Bill had already come across in Ziegler's washroom the night before. We also learn that Nick Nighingale was kicked out of New York, and that it was Ziegler who had Bill followed.

**«With the release of *Eyes Wide Shut* 44 years later, Kubrick reestablishes a noir world through mood. Except this time, he foregoes imitation and pushes the noir mood to its radical conclusion.»**

The last scene of the film also works to give some closure to the mental infidelities between Bill and Alice. Alice tells Bill they should be thankful they've survived their adventures whether they were real or imagined. Bill asks how sure she is about that, and she remarks, « only as sure as I am that the reality of one night let alone that of a whole lifetime can ever be the whole truth ». She then tells him that they must « fuck ». Although very ambiguous and blurred in respect to the aftermath of the previous three nights, this last dialogue between Bill and Alice in the toyshop nonetheless gives closure in the sense that we now at least know that the couple have resumed their marriage and are together again.

On a representational level, the discourse strongly signals the end of the film through cinematography and sound. *Eyes Wide Shut* opens up with a shot of Alice undressing herself in front of the camera. She is framed in between two columns and most importantly is seen alone, with Bill not to be introduced until the next shot. At the end of the film, Alice is the subject of the frame in the last shot except this time Bill is part of it. In this sense, the first and last shots of the film give the story of Alice and Bill: at first, it is just Alice, undressing sexually in front of the viewer, as if for another person like she alludes to in her fantasy about the naval officer, but by the end of the film both she and Bill come to terms with each other and are finally framed together.

Each of these shots is accompanied or followed by the upbeat music of Shostakovich's *Waltz*. Although I do not like to refer to personal

interpretations of films, I believe Michel Chion accurately describes the theme song that accompanies these two shots by highlighting the fact that it was used as the music for a life-insurance commercial in Holland.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the framing and music of the first and last shots act as firm brackets marking the beginning and end of the film. Combined with the final conversation between Bill and Alice that I described above, the spectator is absolutely forced to accept the end of the film through both story and discursive resolution. I am going in depth to show that the film is closed off tightly because it is precisely this concreteness that allows the audience to follow along as Kubrick plants a forest of trees beneath this storyline.

On a second, deeper and more intriguing level, *Eyes Wide Shut* is concerned with the playing of narration. There is no story in the traditional sense. There are discursive signals that give the film a sort of dreamy quality that is highly subjective. This picture cannot be called noir because it goes beyond noir. To begin with, I'd like to say that it is not my intention to prove that *Eyes Wide Shut* is a « dream » film, but instead my goal is to show that it is a complicated work that so obviously extends beyond the closed-text I described above. In this light, the end becomes an extension of an ambiguously ambiguous film; there really is no end except the end to a dream. In other words, the end is much like the beginning—just there.

Kubrick relies heavily on the mise-en-scene to convey a highly stylized and strange world. He particularly plays with lighting almost as much as he exploits his actors (see *Killer's Kiss* above). At the Ziegler party, Christmas lights shine brightly all throughout the large hall, hanging like large curtains from the wall. Chandeliers, bright lamps and neon-lit Christmas trees fill out the rest of the room. A hazy, glowing cloud of amber fills the ballroom as partygoers dance around in the light. Milich's shop is another setting that Kubrick exploits with lighting: here we have bright « popcorn » Christmas lights hanging from the wall, red bulbs pointed against a bright red curtain in the background and one big bright neon sign filling an otherwise dark shop in the earlier hours of the morning. The best instance of lighting, however, is Bill and Alice's bedroom, which is ridiculously lit to the point that the spectator really has to ask what the source of this lighting is. For instance, the apartment gives off the same amber glow from Ziegler's party and Marion's apartment, except the yellow from the lamps become so bright when contrasted with the blue radiating from the windows. The bright red curtains that frame the moonlight shining through the window further this contrast. Moreover, the point I am making is that this picture is only set during Christmas so that the full effect of lighting can occur. It is lit in a way that shows that the picture wants the spectator to pay extra attention to the highly stylized lighting. It is in the reverse tradition of Classical lighting, namely, it works to stand out in the frame as oppose to lighting the characters « invisibly ». This transforms the setting into a hazy environment.

Mirroring the lighting is the costuming. Especially in the orgy scenes where characters dress with scary and highly stylized masks that highlight high-renaissance Mannerism. All one must do is look at the cloaked figures who wear a flattened mask, a monstrous mask or a silly mask with an elongated nose or beak for evidence.

I am in unison with Chion concerning the argument that the acting in *Eyes Wide Shut* is understated, and that the picture is one of the best acted in recent memory. One of the major complaints of *Eyes Wide Shut* was the precise recording of the irrelevant conversations of every

day life. Bill and Alice say « bella », « how are you doing », and go on tangents about what phrases mean when they are swindled by the suave Hungarian and two beautiful women at Ziegler's party. Alice asks Bill: « Those...two women...from last night...did you...by any chance...happen to...fuck...them? » Why is Alice speaking like this? It seems as if Bill is listening to her words as if they have been heavily distorted. Chion refers to this important aspect of the film's soundtrack as « parroting ». This is when one character says something only to have it repeated in the same or somewhat altered form. For instance, Bill says: « Once a doctor abuses a doctor ». Nick responds: « A never a doctor, never a doctor ». The masked woman who saves Bill says, « I am ready to redeem him ». The man in the red cloak replies, « You are ready to redeem him? » The girls tell Bill they want to take him to « Where the rainbow ends ». He responds, « Where the rainbow ends? » as if to think about what he is experiencing or what these girls really want or perhaps just how nice it sounds. Regardless, the point is that the dialogue works to bring attention to the moment and not to progress a linear narrative. It would be more accurate to describe the mise-en-scene as working to progress the narrative forward in time, but not forward in cause and effect. The parroting acts as an illusion to the facts, and this is precisely because there are no facts: everything that Bill, and consequently ourselves learn, is from what characters say and not from any tangible proof. This is real life. Usually, what the characters say in *Eyes Wide Shut* is different from what they were thinking or are thinking when they say it. Moreover, we get a reality in the film that is made up of what people say, and this usually entails severe ambiguity.

In the ballroom scene I mentioned earlier between Bill and Ziegler, precisely the time when all loose ends are tied up, the opposite can be read. For instance, although Ziegler gives explanations for everything that has happened so far in the film, none of it really sounds convincing. It is just as convincing as any of the ambiguous dialogue. At first he lies to Bill and pretends that the events of the orgy were real by saying that there were « very important people behind the masks », but then at the end of the scene he undercuts his entire explanation by changing arguments and saying that it was all staged, and admitting that the girl who redeemed Bill was a prostitute but that she died on her own terms. In addition to this unreliable explanation, Ziegler explains what happened to Bill in a certain vulgarity. For instance, saying « it was that prick asshole » piano player friend of yours. Or « Nick is at home hanging Mrs. Nick ». To the point, he never tells Bill anything that matches what was seen at the party: « Bill, it was me who nodded my head at you from the second balcony and it was I who sent a gift for you ». Instead, he just lies and has outbursts of vulgarity as if to make his new lie more convincing through passion.

Beyond what the characters say, the events in *Eyes Wide Shut* are even more ambiguous. Obviously, the orgy scene is one that stands out as strange and requiring an explanation. But I am more interested in the little peculiarities of the film. For instance, why Bill orders a beer and the waiter leaves, as if he knows what beer Bill wants; or the reason for why he is pushed and called a fag by a bunch of idiots walking the streets at night, or what Milich's daughter whispers to him in the Rainbow Boutique; or the reason





the prostitute's roommate leads him on only to stop and sit down and talk; or why Marion unexpectedly lunges at her dead father's doctor whom she doesn't even know, and proposes that she loves him; or why Miffich's daughter is embraced the next day at the costume shop; or why Bill and Nick exchange hand-taps five times in the span of a short conversation; or why one of his close patients moved away to Chicago without his knowing about it; or why two women persistently push him to go to where « *the rainbow ends* »; or why the hotel desk clerk acts the way he does; or why the mask from the orgy is put on his pillow while he is away; or why Alice even told him about her fantasy with the naval officer in the first place. These are all examples that will make you second guess what you are watching, and much in the same way as Ziegler's explanation to Bill, they force you to re-look and re-interpret what is happening: does Marion really love Bill? Did the roommate really want to have sex with him? Etc. Of course one can pass these inconsistencies and peculiarities as mere coincidence or of little relevance to the "closed-text" interpretation outlined earlier, but this would be foolish.

These peculiarities are minor in relation to the bigger events that are less life-like and more dream-like. Here I am referring to Bill's strange encounter with Ziegler and the coked-out prostitute, or the other prostitute who reels him off the street, or the fact that Nick gives him the location, password and requirements to get into the orgy when he did not have to men-

tion it at all, or the man who follows him in the streets, or the idea of convincing someone to let you into their store in the middle of the morning so you can try on a costume, or even the « *philosophical* » conversation Bill has with his wife in the toyshop at the end of the film. In addition to the sheer strange encounters, each « *dream scene* », as I will call them, is undercut with a shot of a taxi or other type of car bustling in the busy streets of New York. I point this out because I feel it highlights each previous scene as exotic to the everyday.

I would now like to turn to David Hume and causality (or lack of it) to show that *Eyes Wide Shut* works on a different level from the « *common sense* » rationality that guides virtually all other films. In a nutshell, Hume's philosophy was that you should believe only what you have good reason to believe in. For Hume, the mind is made up of impressions and ideas. He called « *Impressions* » the « *more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will* ». In other words, impressions refer to the world's impressing of itself onto us (light, waves, etc). Sense impressions are linked with « *ideas* », which are the dull, faded, non-living and reflective perceptions that are based on our impressions. In real terms, impressions refer to the information our senses give us whereas ideas refer to our ideas of imagination. Moreover, ideas of mind are made up by a large collection of impressions that we acquire from the outside world through experience. In short, the argument attempts to show that an idea cannot exist without some impression or combination of impressions. Causality is one such idea.

Hume uses an example of a billiard ball that is hit into motion by another to show

that there is no corresponding impression to suggest any connection between them. While people will see one ball hit the other and conclude this as an act of cause and effect, the truth is that there is nothing to validate this inference. Although the first billiard can be seen hitting the second, the necessary connection that must be present to allow such an event is invisible to us. It cannot be explained why the first billiard causes the second to move. Hume says there is an impression that suggests cause and effect, but none to suggest a necessary connection. In other words, we can sense things but cannot necessarily explain why they happen. Sure, the billiard balls moves after it is hit by another one, but this is something we see visually from experience and assume rationally. This is just how we function. Hume is not trying to show that cause and effect relationships do not exist, but rather that we do not know how it exists since we do not have a real understanding of a necessary connection (rationally). How do we know that the sun will rise tomorrow? For Hume we know from our experience that it always does and not from any rational explanation. Life is lead by experience not reason, and it is experience that is the logic of the natural world of *Eyes Wide Shut*.

*Eyes Wide Shut* seems to work as a problematic or extremely ambiguous closed-text film, but on the second and deeper level hinted at by the discourse it is a story of real life as we may perceive it. There is no cause and effect or real logic to events except that they are just as real as the more routine and easily understood interactions of the every day. The events in the film have no logical explanations simply because they are just events and experiences. There are no

true rational and logical explanations for connecting two things. Nothing is signified except that there are signifiers. The signified exists only if we make it exist. In other words, every little thing that we come across and which we decide to pay attention to is comprehended only because we force an assumed interpretation to it like the necessary connection between two billiard balls. I wouldn't go as far to suggest that there is any apperception within the text, but a certain world is created, which no doubt is radical from the normal perceptions of banality that we sometimes receive in our normal states. I feel that film noir gives a glimpse away from normal states, but this picture in particular gives a full view. Bill's venture through the world of *Eyes Wide Shut* is one filled with experiences that resemble the impressions outlined in Hume's philosophy. Logic takes a back seat to the more realistic experience without any assumed necessary connections. Realistic experience is logic. This is why I will call *Eyes Wide Shut* a dream story. It is a dream, but not one much different from our own reality in so far that it is a little more intriguing perhaps because there is no assumed logical explanation for anything, and thus no closure to end what has never progressed. • Further reading and citations for this article are available at [www.inmisherald.com](http://www.inmisherald.com).

